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Museum of Fine Arts Bulletin

Published bi-monthly by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts
Subscription price, 50 cents per year postpaid. Single copies, 10 cents; after a year, 20 cents

VOL. XVIII

AUGUST, 1920

No. 108



Kuan-yin P'u-sa. Wood sculpture overlaid with color and gold Chinese, Sung, twelfth century
Purchased from the Hervey Edward Wetzel Fund



Copy of the inscription on the back of the figure of Kuan-yin P'u-sa

Kuan-yin P'u-sa of the Twelfth Century

FROM the illustration on the preceding page it is possible to get an excellent general idea of the large and important Chinese Buddhist wood-sculpture which has been recently bought with a part of the fund bequeathed to the Museum by the late Hervey Edward Wetzel, and is now on exhibition in the first gallery of Chinese Buddhist paintings.

Structurally, the figure is an assemblage of parts varying in size from that of the body to that of a single bead in the headdress or necklace. In this respect it is like all Chinese sculptures of its bulk and material, and resembles also the great mass of Chinese Buddhist sculpture, whether of wood or of stone, in the fact that its entire surface was originally covered with a thin coating of gesso, over which brilliant colors and gold leaf were laid and at intervals relaid as wear and tear required or temple funds permitted. Vestiges of no less than three such pious restorations can be easily seen in layers at various points on the body and drapery; but although the greater part of the figure is still overlaid with color and gold, no one layer is now continuous over any large proportion of the surface, and while some areas remain heavily coated, others are not only denuded of every trace of gesso, but even show the bare wood deeply weathered. Evidently it is only reasonable to suppose that, inasmuch as the coloring of the figure has needed and received occasional restoration, similar care may well have been bestowed upon the more fragile portions of the sculptured wood itself, and it is therefore in no way surprising to find clear indications of some such necessary repairs, although few of them, and these quite obviously, seem to be of recent date. On the other hand, a number of small parts,—chiefly bits of ornaments and tip-ends of drapery,—have, in the past, become detached

and have never been replaced; but the only thing of importance now missing is the throne or, more probably, the sculptured rock on which the figure was originally seated. Every essential contour, however delicate, of the figure, its dress and ornaments, was apparently carved in wood, and only just enough gesso was then applied over all to produce a finely finished surface suitable for coloring. There are, nevertheless, certain purely decorative borders on the scarf and skirts which are actually modelled in gesso, in the slightest possible relief; and on the lower part of the back is an inscription achieved by similar means though somewhat more boldly. The decorative borders seem to be contemporary with the sculpture; but since the inscription is plainly attached to one of the later layers of color, it must be regarded as a more recent addition. Even so, it is unfortunate that the text, a copy of which is reproduced herewith, is now so fragmentary that it yields little information beyond the name of a place, the Chi-shan District of southwestern Shansi, where, perhaps, the temple which once housed the figure was situated. Judging, then, from present physical conditions only, we seem to be justified in believing that our image has come down to us from a respectable antiquity; but in order to approximate more closely the date at which the figure was made, it will be necessary to enter somewhat into the history and iconography of the divinity represented. As to his identity, however, there can hardly be any question. His spiritual rank as revealed in pose, dress and ornaments, and the little figure of a seated *Buddha* which forms the chief feature of his crown, together clearly suggest the person of Kuan-yin P'u-sa, the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara of Indian Buddhism, who is regarded by all followers of certain schools as the special personification and most approachable source of divine mercy and protection.

The Sanskrit term *Bodhisattva* means "one whose essence (*sattva*) is enlightenment (*bodhi*)," and is associated with a doctrinal theory which is nearly as old as Buddhism itself. The Sanskrit name Avalokitesvara means "On-looking Lord," and is applied to one of the principal anthropomorphic forms in which the Bodhisattva theory came to be personified. So far as we know neither this theory nor, of course, the idea of personifying it was formulated by Gautama;* but the term Bodhisattva was applied first to him as a historical figure between his adoption of the religious life and his *nirvana* or Great Awakening to the perfect enlightenment which is Buddhahood. As the actual origin and outcome of his own doctrine, he was at first naturally regarded as the sole Bodhisattva, the sole Buddha — at once the Saviour and the Saved; but the practical necessity of accounting for the past and providing for the future of salvation must soon have become apparent to his missionary followers, and hence Buddhas who had preceded him as Bodhisattvas, and Bodhisattvas who were to succeed him as Buddhas, began to take shape in Buddhist thought. At the same time the historical Buddha was becoming more and more a legendary figure, and as his transformation from a person into a personification progressed the mythical Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, on the contrary, were being transformed from personifications into persons. To begin with, they were all alike vaguely conceived. The Buddhas of the past were given names and were provided also with biographies corresponding in every detail with the accepted life of Gautama. Since, however, they were type-embodiments of the Saved, of an ideal state in which individuality has been utterly extinguished, they necessarily remained somewhat colorless. The Bodhisattvas, on the other hand, were type-embodiments of the Saviour, of an ideal of active, universal altruism through which salvation might be achieved, and although the incalculable majority of them were nameless and were referred to only as an edifying aggregate, "equal in number to the sands of sixty Ganges rivers," some of them — notably Avalokitesvara — came to be among the most clearly defined personages of Buddhism.

In Buddhist literature mention of Avalokitesvara and of his special mercies occurs as early, certainly, as the third century of our era,† and then in a form so fully elaborated as to suggest that his worship must have become well established at a much earlier date. Whether, among the contemporary Indo-Hellenistic sculptures of Gandhara, where the Buddha figure itself first appeared in art,‡ there are any representations of Avalokitesvara is a point in Buddhist iconography not yet settled; but that the Gandharan artists were familiar with the Bodhisattva theory, or that they embodied it in some, at least,

of their abundant works, is beyond question.* Undoubtedly our failure to recognize the figure of Avalokitesvara in this early Buddhist art might either be accounted for by the supposition that in those days the pantheon did not include such a divinity, or be attributed to the fact that the rules then governing iconography were by no means as uniform and exacting as they afterward became; but of these alternatives the latter seems by far the more probable. On the whole, therefore, it is fair to assume that the worship of Avalokitesvara as a god was characteristic of Buddhism as the Chinese first knew it at the beginning of our era, and to admit that his appearance in the art of that period was, at least, not unlikely.†

For purposes of representation Avalokitesvara was originally imagined by Indian Buddhists as a young man, graceful in form and princely in appearance, his body largely bare and his few garments — a double skirt and a scarf — suitable for wear in a warm climate only, such as that of Central India. By those who followed the *Mahayana* doctrine, — especially followers of the Tantrik‡ sects, — he was later conceived to appear also in many other anthropomorphic aspects, some mild, some fierce, some normal, some monstrous; but with these manifestations we are not now concerned. In early Chinese Buddhist art, — of which no example prior to the fifth century is known to us, — there is a quality of primitiveness which is never found in even the earliest and, of course, far older Buddhist art of Gandhara and India proper. Judging by the most ancient surviving specimens of Indian art, there must have existed in that country a native artistic tradition of considerable antiquity already available for the uses of Buddhism, and in Gandhara the traditions of Greek art, though degenerate, were nevertheless manipulated with sufficient

*Oldenburg's identification of Avalokitesvara among Gandharan sculptures, though plausible as far as it goes, is hardly conclusive. On the other hand, figures of Maitreya, the Bodhisattva who is to be the next Buddha, are easily identifiable.

†Gods as such received little or no consideration in the Buddha's personal teaching. The logic of his doctrine can best be stated in his own words: "That being thus, this comes to be; from the coming to be of that, this arises; that being absent, this does not happen; from the cessation of that, this ceases: such is the uprising of this whole body of Ill." According to this formula the phenomenal universe — whether considered as matter or spirit, as perceived or perceiving, in whole or in part — is invariably a product of causation, a process of Becoming, which, in the nature of things, can be functionally abolished to any extent and at any time by doing away with the conditions necessary to its continuance. Since man, primarily because of ignorance, is involved in this causal nexus solely through an individuality consisting in his reactions under natural law to his impressions and interpretations, it is only through extinction of that individuality, primarily by means of progressive or intuitive enlightenment, that he may expect release. In such a theory there can be, of course, no logical place for the casual or the arbitrary — for the special providence inherent in the God-idea. Moreover, the theory is a denial of all teleological conceptions, such as immortality, or the Soul of Brahmanical philosophy; for in impermanence the only possible entity is law. Thus it is clear that the theology of later Buddhism is rooted, not in the Buddha's teaching, but in the terminology of subsequent Buddhist thought. His statement that all phenomenal existence constitutes a "body of Ill" is of interest not only because it was this assumption which impelled the Buddha to preach his doctrine of salvation, but also because it was the later insistence on this assumption which encouraged a system of altruistic piety (the *Mahayana* or Great Vehicle of salvation) at the expense of a system of egoistic morality (the *Hinayana* or Little Vehicle of salvation), and largely substituted in men's minds the idea of appeal to a gorgeous pantheon of miracle-working deities for the more arduous method of self-training and self-control taught by primitive Buddhism.

‡The *Tantra* constitute a class of Hindu literary works dealing with the use of formulæ and gestures (*mudra*) in acquiring desired physical and psychological powers. The system was adopted by certain Buddhist sects in the sixth century A. D., and produced a profound effect on the ritual practice and iconography of later Buddhism.

*Founder of Buddhism; the only historical Buddha. Born about 563, died about 483 B. C.

†In the *Saddharma-pundarika*, Chap. XXIV.

‡Possibly as early as the first century B. C., though the flourishing period of Gandharan art is generally thought to have been from the first to the third century A. D.



Avalokitesvara (of bronze) Ceylon, eighth century

technical skill in the service of the new religion. In China, on the other hand,—where, indeed, a wholly indigenous and highly developed art had long flourished,—the ready-formulated ideas and artistic demands of Buddhism presented a host of unfamiliar technicalities to be mastered, and an important result of the stimulus thus applied was the nearest approach to a truly primitive art which Buddhism ever produced. Apart, however, from genuine misunderstandings and consequent executive crudities due to these circumstances,—crudities, moreover, which long survived as mere provincialisms,—and apart from such slight modifications of the divine apparel as at first, perhaps, seemed necessary to dwellers in the colder climate of northern China, the early Chinese representations of Avalokitesvara followed in all essentials the original Indian visualization of this deity, and with rapidly increasing technical proficiency, stimulated and informed by the recurrent influx of iconographic niceties from India, the anthropomorphic prototype of Avalokitesvara came to be as fluently and accurately represented in the art of China as it ever was in that of India.

Comparison of the wooden Kuan-yin now under discussion with an important bronze Avalokitesvara made in Ceylon in the eighth century A. D., and now owned by this Museum,* will make the fore-

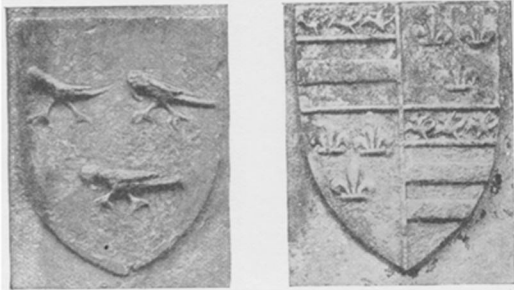
going conclusion abundantly clear; and yet, in spite of their close resemblance, there is between these two images a characteristic difference which must be entirely Chinese in origin,—a difference which is subjective rather than objective, and lies in the obvious impression of femininity which the wooden figure conveys. Strictly speaking, all Bodhisattvas are conceived to have passed, in a spiritual sense, entirely beyond the limitations of sex, though they retain the power to manifest themselves either as males or as females. Excluding for the moment those pagan deities whom Buddhism has included in its pantheon and endowed with Bodhisattva rank, the great Bodhisattvas are regularly depicted in Indian art as masculine, while their feminine manifestations,—their reflexes, so-called,—though regarded as about equal in rank, are plainly distinguished from them both in name and anatomy. Thus, the feminine reflex (*śakti*) of Avalokitesvara is shown as an obviously female divinity called Tara, who, as a dispenser of mercies, was popular in India until the practical extinction of *Mahayana* Buddhism in that country, and in Tibet has long overshadowed her male prototype in public estimation; but in China the worship of Tara seems never to have thriven, if, indeed, it ever took root at all, and it seems quite possible, therefore, that the world-wide tendency to regard compassion and mercy as characteristics rather of women than of men may have been the origin of the Chinese feminization of Avalokitesvara himself, though in India the same idea, perhaps, had already found more normal expression in a distinct, female type of deity. However this may be, there is no doubt that the feminizing process began at an early date and culminated, probably some time during the twelfth century, in an avowedly female Kuan-yin who is often represented with a child in her arms and is worshipped throughout China as the chief dispenser of divine favors and the giver of children. It is this Kuan-yin who is commonly known to us as the Buddhist "Goddess of Mercy."*

Turning again to the sculpture before us, we can see that although it is a highly expert and sophisticated accomplishment, it is by no means merely glib in a technical sense, and is sensitive in execution without being in the least weak. If its maker lacked the power of direct appeal so common among his earliest predecessors, and expressed himself more subtly and more charmingly, he was still far from indulging in sentimentality or striving after elaboration for its own sake. The general impression of femininity received from his work is,

*There can be little question that the Kuan-yin of later Buddhism derives some of her characteristics from an indigenous, semi-legendary Chinese heroine or goddess; but the personalities of the two have long been confused beyond all hope of complete disentanglement. In this connection it is suggestive that although the name Avalokitesvara may be correctly expressed in Chinese either by transliteration of the Sanskrit compound itself or by translation of its meaning, the divinity so called is far more commonly known in China by the name of the older native goddess of mercy and progeny. Thus the use of the name Kuan-tzu-tsai, "On-looking Lord," is relatively rare; while Kuan-shih-yin or, more briefly, Kuan-yin "One who hears the sounds (i. e., prayers) of the world," is widely prevalent. The case of Kuan-yin probably illustrates the tendency of Buddhism to adopt pagan deities wherever found, or, in other words, to express all conceptions of deity in Buddhist terms.

*M. F. A. 17.2312. See the accompanying illustration and, more particularly, the *Catalogue of the Indian Collections in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*. Part II, pp. 31-32 (now in press).

indeed, profound; yet in no actual respect is the figure female. On the whole, then, the sculpture would seem to have been made at a time when the proficient and objective Buddhist art of T'ang had been replaced somewhat, at least, by the more deeply inspired and subjective art of Sung, and if, therefore, we date the figure in the twelfth century of our era, we shall not, in all probability, be far wrong. J. E. L.



Arms of Jean de Wignacourt

A French Escutcheon of the Sixteenth Century

THE Pietà from Eastern France, described and illustrated in the Bulletin for April, 1919, contains two escutcheons bearing devices which it was at the time impossible to connect with any known family line in France. The Marquis de Luppé has since kindly interested himself in their identification, and learns that the bearings in the right hand shield are those of Messire Jean de Wignacourt, Knight, Governor of Le Quesnoy in the sixteenth century, whose wife was Jeanne Baillaud (or Bailleud) à Corneille. The birds on the shields represent the smaller species of crow called in French "corneille." The three fleurs-de-lis, although since Louis VII (d. 1180) the special emblem of the kings of France, are found independently of any royal connection in the arms of many noble families. The identification of the devices contributes to the importance of the relief as a document in the history of sculpture in France, and the Museum gladly acknowledges its indebtedness to M. de Luppé for his interest in the matter.

Resignations of Mr. Huger Elliott and Mrs. Robert L. Scales

MR. HUGER ELLIOTT, Director of the Department of Design at the School of the Museum and Secretary of the Council since 1912, and Supervisor of Educational Work at the Museum since 1913, has resigned his position to become Principal at the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Art in Philadelphia. In this post Mr. Elliott becomes the colleague of Mr. Langdon

Warner, Assistant Curator of Chinese and Japanese Art at this Museum from 1909 to 1913, and since appointed Director of the Museum in Philadelphia. It is understood that Mr. Elliott will supervise the educational work of the Philadelphia Museum in addition to his duties at the School.

Mrs. Robert L. Scales, Assistant in the educational work of the Museum since 1913, and Museum Instructor since 1915, has resigned her position to become Dean of Women at the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh. The Institute offers its women students courses in household economics, library work, secretarial studies, and the arts of design. The Dean of Women has no responsibilities in connection with the teaching given, but is otherwise in charge of the whole life of the women students, now numbering between four and five hundred.

The regret universally felt at the Museum over the resignations of Mr. Elliott and Mrs. Scales is tempered by the assurance that both these officers are undertaking large responsibilities for which they are admirably fitted, at once by endowment and by their experience at this Museum.

Notes

IN THE FIRST WATER-COLOR ROOM in the Evans Building there have been gathered a number of pieces of furniture, of silver and of pewter, dating from the early years of the Plymouth Colony. The exhibit includes a panelled oak chest brought over in the *Mayflower* by Edward Winslow, afterward Governor of Plymouth Colony.

THE BRONZE STATUE OF PHILLIPS BROOKS by the late Bela L. Pratt, shown for some time in the grounds of the Boston Society of Natural History, has been temporarily installed in the Forecourt of the Museum, where it forms a pendant to the statue of Nathaniel Hawthorne by the same sculptor. It is understood that a permanent location for the statue is under consideration by the Committee in charge.

MISS MARGARET L. WHEELER, Radcliffe 1918, has been appointed assistant in educational work, and in the autumn will assume the duties hitherto performed by Mrs. Scales.

MR. ASHTON SANBORN has been appointed Secretary to Dr. Reisner and will take up his duties in Egypt early in the fall. Mr. Sanborn formerly assisted in the work of the Classical Department and has since been engaged with the Egyptian Expedition of the University of Pennsylvania.

During the coming season Dr. Reisner plans to continue the exploration of the tombs of the Kings of Ethiopia in the Sudan. Dr. Reisner reports that another consignment of the results of his work is nearly ready for shipment to America.